

AD WATCH

Scenes from West Africa

In a photo essay on tobacco promotions in the Yucatán,¹ the Editor encouraged readers of *Tobacco Control* to contribute observations from their own travels to the journal. Last year I visited Conakry, Guinea and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Both Conakry and Abidjan are the capital cities of these West African countries, where French is the official language.

In the airport in Abidjan, a backlit Marlboro sign at least 20 feet (6.1 m) in height towered above all of the other airport advertisements. Just outside the airport, I saw a woman and child sitting under a Benson and Hedges sign, begging tourists for change (figure 1).

In a marketplace in Conakry, small stands with Marlboro signs or under Marlboro umbrellas were commonplace (figure 2). These stands sold Marlboro and Winston, along with many other cigarette brands such as Congress and Memphis. At this market, I was struck by several images of the innocent victims: an adult cigarette vendor whose health matched the product's end result (figure 3), a child who fashioned a hat from cartons of prestigious foreign tobacco brands (figure 4), and a teenager who made his living selling plastic Winston shopping bags (figure 5).

I purchased a Marlboro soccer magazine from a street pedlar in Guinea (figure 6). As in the US and other countries, Marlboro is a

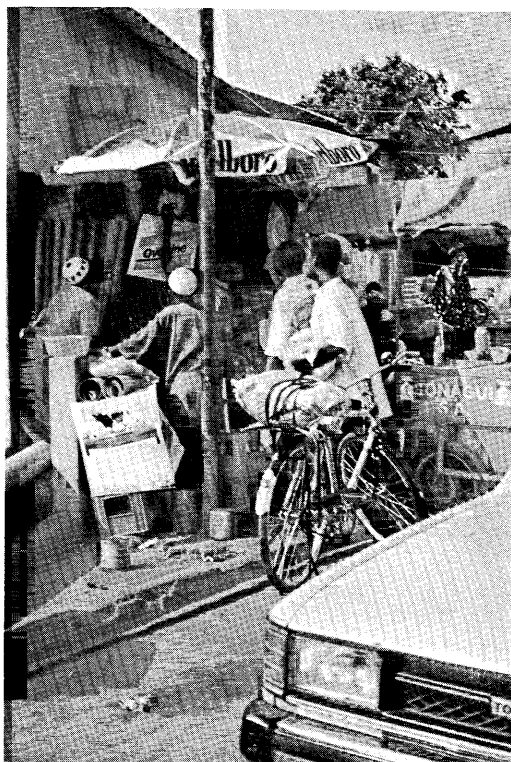


Figure 2



Figure 1



Figure 3

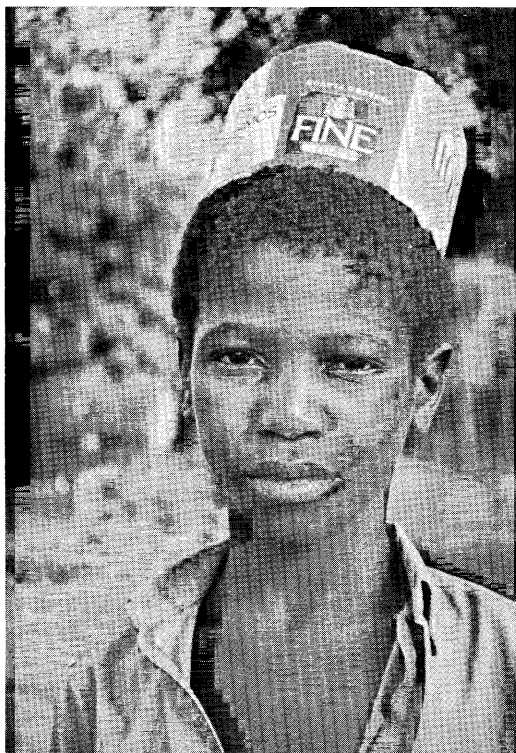


Figure 4



Figure 5

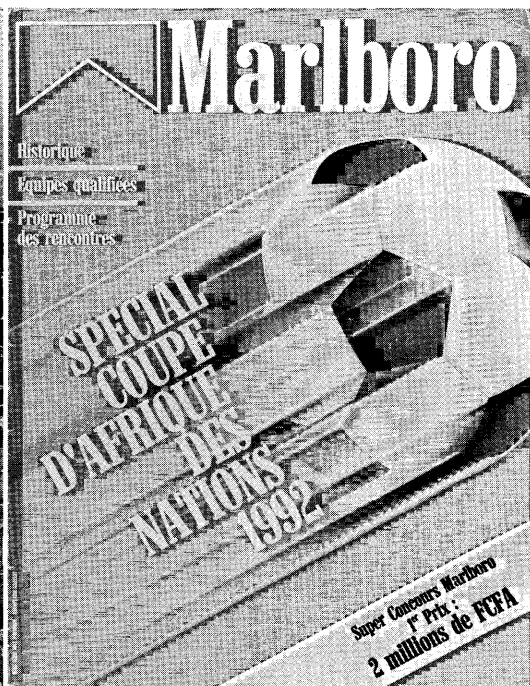
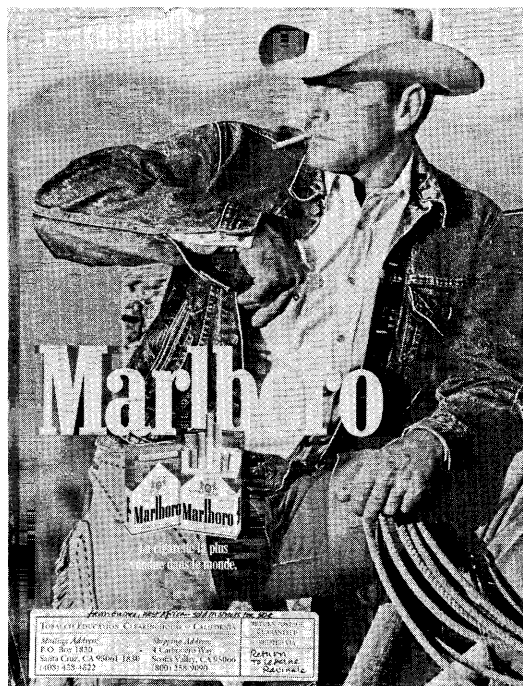


Figure 6

major sponsor of sports in Africa. The centre-page fold-out offered prize money to the smoker who could pick the "all-star" team, to be submitted with the top of a Marlboro pack. The magazine featured scenes of soccer play throughout its pages, except for two pages that contained the familiar images of traditional djembe drums and a woman with a fibrous stick in her mouth (commonly used as a natural toothbrush) (figure 7). At first glance, however,

one might assume that she is smoking, even though smoking is not considered socially acceptable for women in this country. Could this be a subliminal message to an untapped market?

In a rural area outside of Conakry, I visited a restaurant with cigarette ads on the walls. A poster for Paramount cigarettes featured a white racing car driver (figure 8), and a sign for the Cosmos brand showed the New York City

GROUPES AB

Marlboro Program

A QUELQUES heures de vol de Paris, le Sénégal offre sa véritable condensation de l'Afrique Noire. Baobabs au-dessus des savanes ; villages de pêcheurs en pleine activité, forêts inextricables et savanes, épaisseur chaude et humide de la Casamance... Sentiers d'illusions.

Le Sénégal c'est aussi - comment l'appeler ? - un avant-goût du paradis à la mode d'Égypte : les plages de sable doré, l'eau bleue à l'horizon ou l'Égypte perdue.

(Statue de l'Unité, Dakar ; le Village de la Goutte)

Groupe A - DAKAR			Groupe B - DAKAR		
12 janvier - 18h30	Sénégal	Nigeria	12 janvier - 16h00	Cameroon	Maroc
13 janvier - 18h00	Nigeria	Kenya	14 janvier - 18h30	Maroc	Zaire
14 janvier - 16h00	Sénégal	Kenya	16 janvier - 18h30	Cameroon	Zaire

Quarts de finale

19 janvier - 15h30	Vainqueur A	Second B	13
19 janvier - 18h30	Vainqueur B	Second A	14

Demi-finales

23 janvier - 18h00	Vainqueur N°13	Vainqueur N°16	17
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Match de classement

25 janvier - 18h30	Perdant N°17
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Finale

26 janvier - 18h00	Vainqueur N°17
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Figure 7

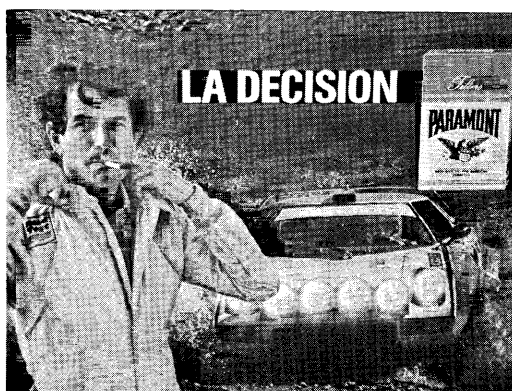


Figure 8

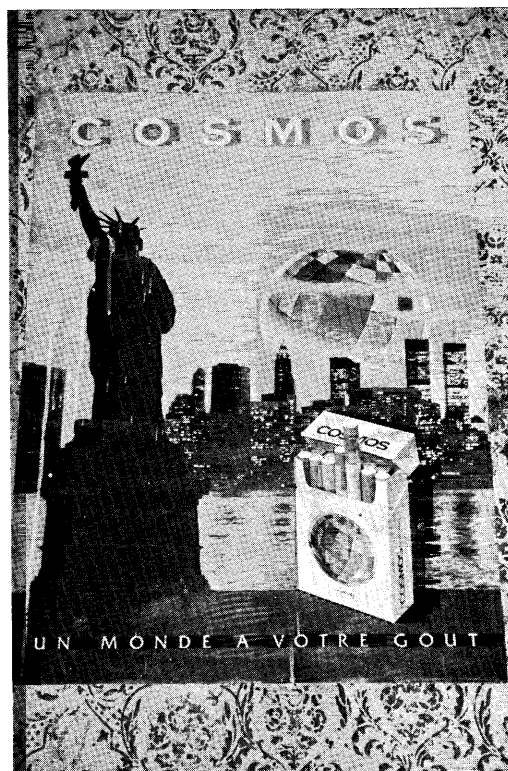


Figure 9

skyline with the Statue of Liberty (figure 9). The use of our cherished symbol of freedom to promote a deadly, addicting product illustrates the tobacco industry's contempt for truth, morality, and the health of the people of Africa.

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1 Davis RM. Scenes from the Yucatán. *Tobacco Control* 1993; 2: 162-3.

A report from the World Health Organisation on Côte d'Ivoire appeared in the last issue of Tobacco Control (1993; 2: 253-4). - ED

Snakes, sin, and cigarettes

Earlier this year Philip Morris launched an 85 mm version of Benson & Hedges, Special Kings, in the US. As with nearly all of the company's other premium brands now, a clothing catalogue has been developed for the brand extension. All the items carry a slogan – a drug claim, actually – which promises relief from anxiety: “Take the edge off”.

A new series of magazine, billboard and taxi ads appeared in May which play on the black and gold livery of the packages. One ad features a solid black snake (an Indian racer) coiled around a pack of the cigarettes (figure 1). The ads are a striking departure from the usual imagery of US cigarette ads, borrowing instead from the British style of visual puns.



Figure 1 From Esquire magazine, June 1993



Figure 2 From Playboy magazine, June 1993

The choice of a snake as “spokesreptile” is startling. Even though Philip Morris is quick to point out that Indian racers are not poisonous, the animal evokes mystery, temptation, and risk. The ads seem to say, “Let yourself be tempted. Taking risks is part of life, and (as with the snake), not all risks are as menacing as they are said to be”.

Philip Morris' foray into herpetology reminds us of the other recent advertisement we have seen which features a snake (figure 2). Hedonism II, a Caribbean resort which describes itself as “a lush garden of pure pleasure,” promises “every pleasure in paradise for one single price.”

Forbidden fruit. Original sin. Good and evil. Taking risks. Powerful images. Great advertising.

JOHN SLADE
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Cigarette marketing in the US copies developing country techniques

Philip Morris US has recently borrowed a couple of marketing ideas its international arm has used for years in developing countries.

Beginning in May 1993, vans painted like Marlboro billboards have travelled throughout 48 of the 50 US states (figure 1). Their mission is to give away free, Marlboro-branded merchandise in exchange for proofs of purchase from the stores which host the van. The



Figure 1 Marlboro van and promotional hut, US, 1993



Andrew Hahn

Figure 2 Marlboro Pavillion, Guatemala, 1987

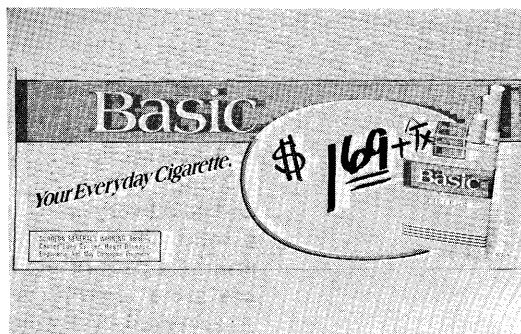


Figure 3

practice is similar to that used in Guatemala in 1987 where a temporary Marlboro pavillion was set up in villages to distribute Marlboro clothing (figure 2).

As discounted cigarettes have become more and more popular (now accounting for as much as a third of all cigarette sales in the US), Philip Morris has come to dominate this segment as well. Its leading low price brand is Basic, which is the third leading seller in the country, after only Marlboro and Winston. Philip Morris styles Basic as "Your everyday cigarette," drawing an obvious contrast to premium brands such as Marlboro (figure 3). The customer is invited to think of Basic as an ordinary, workaday smoke and to regard a premium brand as something for special occasions, to celebrate or to impress someone. The phenomenon which may have inspired this slogan is commonly seen in Eastern Europe and Asia where people sometimes put their inexpensive cigarettes into an imported pack like Marlboro and, indeed, save the premium smoke for special occasions.

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